

SAF/LLZ (Legislative Research Team)

OBERSTAR, James L. (Democrat)
Representative, 8th District, Minnesota
Elected 1974 to the 94th Congress
Reelected to succeeding Congresses



BACKGROUND

Born: Chisholm, Minnesota - 10 September 1934

Home: Chisholm, Minnesota

Marital status: Widower - 4 children

Religion: Roman Catholic

Education: College of St. Thomas, B.A., 1956; College of Europe, Bruges, Belgium, M.A., 1957

Military: None (Navy civilian language teacher, Haiti, 1959-63)

Profession: Congressional Aide

Political: Admin assistant to Rep John Blatnik (D-MN), 1963-74; administrator of the House Public Works Cmte, 1971-4. Succeeded Rep Blatnik in 1974. Ran unsuccessfully for the Democratic Senate nomination in 1984. Reelected in 1998 with 66% of the vote, in 2000 with 68% of the vote, and in 2002 with 69% of the vote.

Rep Oberstar, described as an unrepentant New Deal-style liberal, is considered pro-labor. As chairman, Public Works Subc on Aviation, was a key player on civil aviation issues. Took a seat on Budget Cmte, 100th Congress. Appointed to Democratic Steering & Policy Cmte in 1987. Chaired the Democratic Study Group (DSG) in the 99th Congress. Isconsidered an expert on Haiti based on his Navy civilian work.

In the 101st Congress, was concerned that civil aviation relied too much on the military for trained pilots. In 1990, proposed an alternative budget that would have cut defense by \$15B, limiting the B-2 program and terminating MX and SICBM.

In the 102nd Congress, opposed granting the President authority to use military force in the Persian Gulf. Supported the V-22 program because of its potential civilian uses. Favorsmarket forces over regulations as a means of driving the defense industry.

In the 103d Congress, said most-favored-nation status for China should be conditioned on its response to nuclear non-proliferation. Introduced legislation to terminate the Ground Wave Emergency Network (Minneapolis Star Tribune, 26Jan94, p.13) (AF has stopped the GWEN program). In the 104th Congress, lost his Chair of the Aviation Subc and came off the Foreign Relations Cmte when the GOP took control of the House. When Rep Mineta (D-CA) resigned from Congress, became ranking member on Transportation. Wants to make the FAA independent of the Transportation Dept.

In the 106th Congress, opposed H.R. 1838, Taiwan security enhancement, because he was concerned about undermining a sound, bipartisan foreign policy that has served the nation well for more than 20 years. In the 107th Congress, troubled by the FBI's handling of Zacarias Moussaoui who was questioned about immigration concerns but never followed up on. Moussaoui was taking flying lessons in Minnesota and involved with the Sept 11th attacks.

Additional: Wife, Jo, died of breast cancer in Jul91.

AF Bases: Duluth IAP (ANG)

COMMITTEES

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE -- Ranking